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METHOD FOR CONTROLLING AND/OR REGULATING
A D.C. CONVERTER FOR AT LEAST TWO ELECTROMAGNETIC VALVES
OF AN INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE,
IN PARTICULAR IN A MOTOR VEHICLE,

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Background Information

The present invention is directed to a method for controlling
and/or regulating a d.c. converter for at least two
10 electromagnetic valves of an internal combustion engine in a
motor vehicle in particular, in which each valve is supplied
with a current generated by the d.c. converter. The present
invention also relates to a corresponding device for
controlling and/or regulating a d.c. converter for at least
15 two electromagnetic valves.

It is known that a plurality of electromagnetic valves may be
supplied with current by a d.c. converter via an output stage.
In this context, it is possible for overlapping currents for
20 the different valves to result in a high load for the d.c.
converter on the whole. The d.c. converter must be designed
for this high load, which is associated with increased
expenditure under some circumstances.

25 Object and Advantages of the Invention

The object of the present invention is to create a method of
the type defined at the outset, in which the expenditure for
processing a high load of the d.c. converter is reduced.

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This object is achieved with a method of the type defined at
the outset according to the present invention by the fact that
it determines when the total currents supplied to the valves
represent a high load for the d.c. converter, and if this is
35 the case, the d.c. converter is influenced in the sense of

improved processing of the high load. The present invention is also achieved by a corresponding device.

The d.c. converter is set to the high load using the present invention. Thus this d.c. converter is capable of better processing this high load. This in turn entails the advantage that the d.c. converter need no longer be designed on the basis of the high load but instead may be designed by taking into account the better processing according to the present invention. In particular, it is possible to select the output capacitor of the d.c. converter to be smaller than would be necessary per se because of the high load.

In an advantageous further refinement of the present invention, the output voltage of the d.c. converter is increased when there is a high load. It is preferably provided here that the output voltage is controlled and/or regulated to a setpoint value and the setpoint value is increased.

This measure achieves the result that the high load of the d.c. converter results in a lower dip in the output voltage of same. However, this is equivalent to stating that the high load is processed better by the d.c. converter. In particular, as already mentioned, the smaller dip in the output voltage allows a smaller output capacitor of the d.c. converter to be used.

It is particularly advantageous if the increase in the output voltage and/or the setpoint value is already performed before the high load occurs. Thus the d.c. converter is prepared for the high load. In this case the output voltage already increases to the full extent when the high load occurs and is thus effective.

A further implementation of the present invention includes a computer program having program commands suitable for execution of the method according to the present invention

when the computer program runs on a computer. Accordingly, the present invention is implemented by a digital storage medium including a computer program having program commands suitable for executing the method according to the present invention.

Additional features, possible applications, and advantages of the present invention are derived from the following description and exemplary embodiments of the present invention, which are depicted in the figures. All described or depicted features, either alone or in any combination, constitute the object of the present invention regardless of their combination in the patent claims or their back-references and also regardless of their formulation in the description and/or depiction in the drawing.

Exemplary Embodiments of the Present Invention

Figure 1 shows a schematic block diagram of an exemplary embodiment of a device according to the present invention for controlling at least two electromagnetic valves of an internal combustion engine,

Figure 2 shows a schematic wiring diagram for one of the electromagnetic valves with the current flow in four successive time ranges,

Figure 3 shows a schematic time chart of the current across one of the electromagnetic valves in the four time ranges, and

Figures 4a-4c show three schematic time charts of currents and voltages across or at the electromagnetic valves.

Figure 1 shows a device 10 for controlling at least two electromagnetic valves 11, 12. Electromagnetic valves 11, 12 are provided for use in an internal combustion engine in a motor vehicle in particular. For example, electromagnetic valves 11, 12 may be provided in conjunction with an

electrohydraulic valve control for the intake and exhaust valves of the internal combustion engine. In this case, a hydraulic system is controlled via electromagnetic valves 11, 12, the intake and exhaust valves of the internal combustion engine being able to be opened and closed using the hydraulic system.

It is pointed out here explicitly that subsequently described device 10 may be used not only for two valves 11, 12 depicted here, but device 10 may also be used for any number of valves through appropriate expansions. It is thus possible to have a total of 32 solenoid valves for controlling the intake and exhaust valves of the internal combustion engine in the case of an engine having four cylinders.

Two d.c. converters 13, 14, which together form a converter 17, are provided for supplying power to valves 11, 12. Both d.c. converters 13, 14 and thus converter 17 include control means and/or regulating means for maintaining the generated output voltages at a predetermined setpoint level.

D.c. converter 13 is suitable for generating a booster current on an electric line 15. Accordingly, d.c. converter 14 is suitable for generating a holding current on an electric line 16. The booster current is greater than the holding current.

An output stage 20, which controls the current flow across valves 11, 12, is provided between d.c. converters 13, 14 and valves 11, 12. This control takes place via a control unit 19. The function of output stage 20, its control, and the generated current flow across valve 11 is explained in greater detail below on the basis of Figure 2. The explanation given there also applies accordingly to the current flow across valve 12 and the current flow across any additional valve.

Figure 2 shows lines 15, 16 coming from two d.c. converters 13, 14. Line 16 is connected via a diode D1, which is connected in the flow direction, to one of the two terminals of electromagnetic valve 11. The other terminal of
5 electromagnetic valve 11 is connected via a diode D2, which is also connected in the flow direction, to line 15. The cathodes of both diodes D1, D2 are interconnected via a switch S1. The anode of diode D2 is connected to ground via a switch S2.

10 Depending on the switch positions of two switches S1, S2, there is a different current flow across valve 11. Four different switch positions resulting in four different current flows in four successive time ranges a, b, c, d may be set using two switches S1, S2. Control unit 19 as already
15 mentioned controls the positions of two switches S1, S2.

Figure 3 shows current I_{MV} across electromagnetic valve 11 as a function of time. In particular, Figure 3 shows four time ranges a, b, c, d resulting from the four adjustable switch
20 positions of two switches S1, S2.

In first time range a, both switches S1, S2 are closed. This yields current flow a, as shown in Figure 2 and designated accordingly as "a." The booster current generated by d.c.
25 converter 13 flows across valve 11. This current I_{MV} increases to a final value according to Figure 3 and is provided to adjust valve 11 into a preselected end position in any case.

In second time range b, which follows time range a, switch S1
30 is closed and switch S2 is opened. This yields a current flow as shown in Figure 2 and designated accordingly as "b." This current flow is known as free-running. This means that at least a portion of the electric energy contained in electromagnetic valve 11 is dissipated via this free-running
35 state. Accordingly, current I_{MV} declines in time range b according to Figure 3.

Switch S1 is opened in time range c and switch S2 is closed. This yields a current flow like that shown in Figure 2, where it is designated accordingly as "c." The holding current
5 generated by d.c. converter 14 in time range c is sent to valve 11. This holding current is selected so that the end position reached by valve 11 on the basis of the booster current does not change.

10 Both switches S1, S2 are opened in time range d, which follows time range c. This yields a current flow like that shown in Figure 2 and designated accordingly as "d." This current flow represents quenching of electromagnetic valve 11. This means that the energy in electromagnetic valve 11 is dissipated
15 completely to 0. Current I_M then issuing from valve 11 flows across diode D2 to d.c. converter 13 in time range d.

Figure 4a shows booster current I_B for connected valves 11, 12 generated by d.c. converter 13, plotted as a function of time
20 t.

On the basis of two or more valves 11, 12 present here, it is possible for the booster currents of time ranges a of two or even more valves 11, 12 to overlap. Such overlapping together
25 with the resulting high booster current is designated by reference numeral 22 in Figure 4a.

High booster current 22 results in d.c. converter 13, which is provided for the booster currents, being exposed to very high
30 loads. The following is provided for better processing of these loads:

Control unit 19 is connected to converter 17 via line 18, in particular to d.c. converter 13, which is responsible for the
35 booster current. Control unit 19 determines when a high load has occurred due to overlapping booster currents. Control unit

19 is able to derive this from the provided triggerings of switches S1, S2 of output stage 20.

Before a high load occurs, control unit 19 indicates the imminent high load to converter 17, in particular d.c.

5 converter 13. This is accomplished with the help of a signal S, which is sent from control unit 19 via line 18 to converter 17.

Figure 4b shows signal S plotted as a function of time t. It is apparent here that signal S is present during a period of time T, which extends from a point in time T1 to a point in time T2. This is designated by reference numeral 23 in Figure 4b. Period of time T corresponds approximately to the period of time during which high booster current 22 from Figure 4 is present.

Figure 4c shows output voltage U_B of d.c. converter 13 plotted as a function of time. As mentioned previously, this output voltage U_B is controlled and/or regulated to a predetermined setpoint value. The setpoint value is designated as $U_{B\text{setpoint}}$ in Figure 4c. Control and/or regulation of d.c. converter 13 is designed, for example, so that output voltage U_B of d.c. converter 13 varies in a tolerance range of $\pm 10\%$ around setpoint value U_{Bs} .

As Figure 4c shows, setpoint value U_{Bs} of output voltage U_B of d.c. converter 13 is raised during period of time T. This is indicated with a dashed line in Figure 4c and labeled as 24.

As already mentioned, period of time T of Figure 4b begins shortly before the rise in high booster current 22 in Figure 4a after point in time T1. As a result, setpoint value $U_{B\text{setpoint}}$ also increases just prior to the rise in high booster current 22. This increase in setpoint value $U_{B\text{setpoint}}$ also yields an increase in output voltage U_B of d.c. converter 13, which is

shown by a dashed line in Figure 4c and is designated by reference numeral 25.

After the point in time when booster current I_B (which is designated as 22 in Figure 4a) rises, d.c. converter 13 thus supplies an increased output voltage U_B (designated as 25). This yields the result that d.c. converter 13 is able to better process the high load associated with the rise in booster current I_B .

In particular, increased setpoint value $U_{B\text{setpoint}}$ and resulting increased output voltage U_B result in the dip in this output voltage U_B due to high booster current I_B being lower than would be the case without the aforementioned increase. This is shown in Figure 4c on the basis of the curves designated by reference numerals 26, 27. The curve resulting from the increase in setpoint value $U_{B\text{setpoint}}$ is indicated by a dashed line and is designated by reference numeral 26, while the curve that would result without the above-described increase in setpoint value $U_{B\text{setpoint}}$ is designated by reference numeral 27.

Due to the smaller dip in output voltage U_B (designated as 26 in Figure 4c), it is possible to provide d.c. converter 13 with a lower output capacitance than would be necessary without the increase in setpoint value $U_{B\text{setpoint}}$. It is likewise possible for the control and/or regulating means contained in converter 17 to take preventive measures on the basis of signal S, namely in particular on the basis of the rise in signal S at the beginning of period of time T and to do so as a preventive measure even before the occurrence of a system deviation to counteract the system deviation that would result on the basis of the high booster current. In particular, the control and/or regulating means may increase the output power of d.c. converter 13 as a preventive measure.

Other emergency functions may be implemented via line 18 as follows:

For example, if d.c. converter 14 fails and if this is
5 detected by control unit 19 via measures not described more
closely in the present case, control unit 19 may control
and/or regulate remaining d.c. converter 13 so that it assumes
the function of d.c. converter 14 and additionally generates
the holding current. For example, the output voltage of d.c.
10 converter 13 may be pulsed to thereby generate a corresponding
holding current.

In the inverse case, control unit 19 may control and/or
regulate d.c. converter 14 so that it generates not only the
15 holding current but also the booster current. In particular,
control unit 19 may increase the setpoint value of the output
voltage of d.c. converter 14. In addition, it may be advisable
for control unit 19 to trigger switches S1, S2 at an earlier
point in time for generating the booster current to thus
20 compensate for possible deterioration of the tightening
dynamics of valves 11, 12.